

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

This chapter introduces the information discussed throughout the remainder of this document for the Upper Missouri River Breaks National Monument (Monument). Chapter 1 discusses why the Bureau of Land Management (BLM) is preparing this Draft Resource Management Plan and Environmental Impact Statement (RMP/EIS), how the public was and will continue to be involved in this planning process, how issues were defined and a number of other topics. The information in this chapter is organized into the following headings:

- Background
- Purpose and Need
- Planning Area
- Collaboration
- Planning Process
- Scoping
- Issues Addressed
- Issues Considered but Not Further Analyzed
- Planning Criteria
- Related Plans
- Relationship to BLM Policies, Plans, and Programs
- Vision and Management Goals
- Development of Alternatives
- Draft Resource Management Plan
- Final Resource Management Plan

Background

In May 1999, then Secretary of the Interior Bruce Babbitt floated a portion of the Upper Missouri National Wild and Scenic River (UMNWSR) and toured portions of the Missouri Breaks. During this trip, Mr. Babbitt commented that the BLM land in this area contained a remarkable variety of resources and opportunities and that perhaps the Department of the Interior (DOI) should consider some type of special management for these lands. His comments about special management started a dialogue among various organizations, individuals, state and county entities and the BLM about what special management could mean.

In August 1999, the Secretary of the Interior's office asked the Central Montana Resource Advisory Council (RAC) to develop and recommend broad guidelines, or a framework, to manage BLM land in the Missouri Breaks area (DOI News Release of July 23, 1999 and RAC 1999a).

In October and November 1999, the RAC hosted public meetings in Lewistown and Havre to provide opportunities for public comment about the concept of special manage-

ment for these lands (RAC 1999b, 1999c). In December 1999, the RAC forwarded a 16-page recommendation package to the Secretary of the Interior's office (RAC 1999d). This package outlined the RAC's interpretation of the public comments and offered recommendations for a number of resource programs, should the BLM land be designated for special management.

In May 2000, Mr. Babbitt hosted a public meeting at the University of Great Falls in Great Falls, Montana (Great Falls Tribune, May 3, 2000). The following day, Mr. Babbitt hosted a breakfast meeting in Fort Benton, Montana, and then flew over the Breaks to Lewistown, where he again met with a variety of organizations and individuals (Great Falls Tribune, May 5, 2000). These sessions were question-and-answer opportunities about special management of BLM land in this area.

The Monument was established on January 17, 2001, when President Clinton issued a Proclamation ([Appendix A](#)) under the provisions of the Antiquities Act of 1906. The Monument contains a spectacular array of biological, geological, and historical objects of interest ([Appendix B](#)). From Fort Benton downstream to the James Kipp Recreation Area, the Monument includes 149 miles of the Upper Missouri National Wild and Scenic River, the adjacent Breaks country, and portions of Arrow Creek, Antelope Creek, and the Judith River. The Monument also includes six wilderness study areas, the Cow Creek Area of Critical Environmental Concern, and segments of the Lewis and Clark National Historic Trail and the Nez Perce National Historic Trail. These objects, individually and collectively, in the context of the natural environment that supports and protects them, are the resources discussed throughout this document.

Purpose and Need

The Proclamation states the BLM will remain the managing agency for this Monument. This Draft RMP/EIS sets forth the vision, goals and management guidance for the objects for which the Monument was designated.

The Proclamation provides the basic management direction for this Monument and governs how the provisions of the Federal Land Policy and Management Act (FLPMA) will be applied to the Monument. FLPMA directs the BLM to manage public land on the basis of multiple use and "in a manner that will protect the quality of scientific, scenic, historic, ecological, environmental, air and atmospheric,

water resources, and archaeological values.” The term multiple use, refers to the “harmonious and coordinated management of the various resources without permanent impairment of the productivity of the land and the quality of the environment,” (43 USC 1702). Multiple use involves managing an area for various benefits, recognizing that the establishment of land use priorities and exclusive uses in certain areas is necessary to ensure that multiple uses can occur harmoniously across a landscape.

This Draft RMP/EIS provides a comprehensive plan for managing the Monument and site-specific, detailed plans for managing transportation and natural gas leases in a manner that protects the objects identified in the Proclamation, while recognizing valid existing rights. The Proclamation, FLPMA, National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA), Wild and Scenic Rivers Act, and other mandates provided the direction for preparing this Draft RMP/EIS.

Planning Area

The Monument includes about 375,000 acres of BLM land in northcentral Montana in Blaine, Chouteau, Fergus and Phillips Counties (Figure 1.1). The Monument generally corresponds with the Upper Missouri National Wild and Scenic River from Fort Benton downstream to approximately Arrow Creek, where the Monument begins to widen from 5 to 16 miles on either side of the Missouri River to the Charles M. Russell National Wildlife Refuge. Table 1.1 lists the Monument surface acres by county. Approximately 80,000 acres of private land and 39,000 acres of state land are intermingled with the Monument. The BLM has no jurisdiction over private or state land, and these lands are not part of the Monument.

Table 1.1 Surface Ownership by County	
<i>County</i>	<i>Monument Surface Acres</i>
Blaine	150,239
Chouteau	40,386
Fergus	131,355
Phillips	52,683
Total Acres	374,663

Source: (BLM 2003a)

Collaboration

In 1999, the RAC established the Upper Missouri River RAC Subgroup to analyze the recreational activities on the UMNWSR and to make recommendations to the RAC

concerning future management opportunities for the river. Over the course of 3 1/2 years, the subgroup worked with the BLM and the University of Montana to generate high quality information concerning visitor expectations, resource conditions, and the potential to align recreation use with the objectives of landowners, residents, and businesses in the area. In January and March 2002, the subgroup presented a series of recommendations concerning a variety of people management issues on the UMNWSR, and many of the recommendations were approved by the RAC (RAC 2002a, 2002b). The subgroup translated its prior work into ideas that could be incorporated in the RMP and presented their recommendations in a May 2003 report to the RAC (RAC 2003).

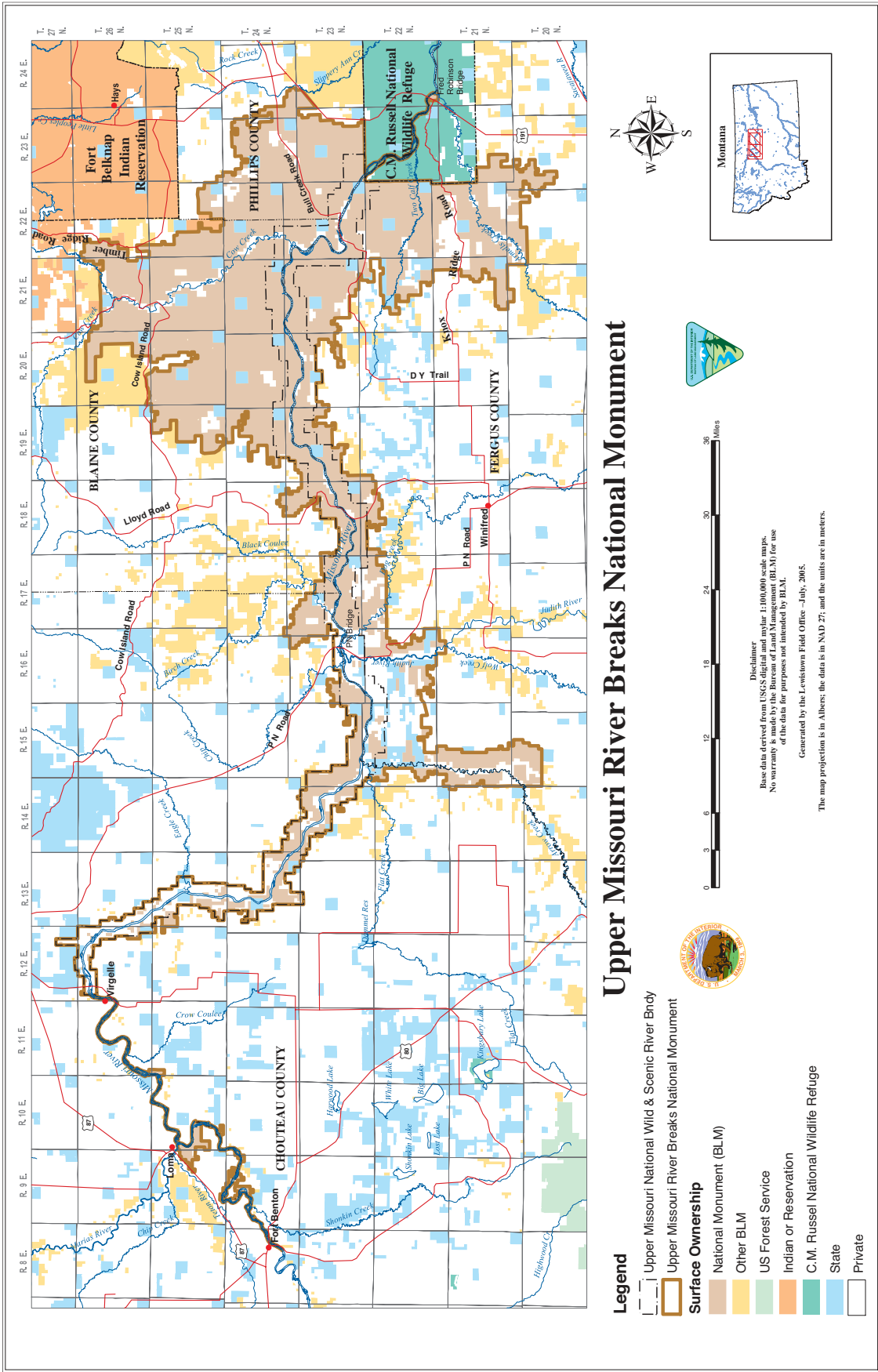
In 2001, Secretary of the Interior Gale Norton asked local officials for their ideas regarding federally mandated land use management plans for new national monuments. In response to this request, Montana Governor Judy Martz appointed a task force to develop recommendations for the Secretary of the Interior. The task force conducted three public meetings to gather public input and also solicited written comments. Approximately 1,700 letters were received. In August 2001, the Governor’s Task Force provided nine recommendations for the Secretary’s consideration (Montana 2001). These recommendations were considered during the development of this RMP/EIS. However, most were not within BLM’s authority and could not be addressed in the alternatives.

In the summer of 2002, the BLM invited state, local and tribal governments to partner in a cooperating agency relationship for developing the RMP/EIS. The State of Montana and Blaine, Chouteau, Fergus and Phillips Counties are cooperating agencies in all phases of its preparation, with BLM acting as the lead agency.

The Central Montana RAC continues to be involved in the preparation of the RMP/EIS. RAC members attended the scoping open houses in July and August 2002, to listen to the public discussions with resource specialists concerning issues related to managing the Monument. In July 2003, the RAC assisted the BLM by facilitating a public discussion on management opportunities during a series of alternative development workshops. The RAC appointed members to attend and participate in the monthly interdisciplinary team meetings. In February, April, June, September, and December 2004, the RAC reviewed the preliminary alternative for the Draft RMP/EIS and provided recommendations to the BLM.

Throughout preparation of the Draft RMP/EIS consultation and coordination have been important components of this planning effort. Public meetings, information mailings and individual contacts with other governmental agencies, American Indian tribes, interest groups and the general public were used to gather information for the Draft RMP/

Figure 1.1
Upper Missouri River Breaks National Monument



EIS. Consultation and coordination will continue throughout the review of the Draft and preparation of the Final RMP/EIS. A list of the public involvement opportunities conducted to date can be found in Chapter 5.

Planning Process

Figure 1.2 shows the major steps in the planning process that led to the publication of this Draft RMP/EIS and the future steps for completing the Final RMP/EIS. The major steps in Figure 1.2 are described in subsequent sections of this chapter.

Scoping

The scoping process identifies land use issues and conflicts. These issues stem from new information or changed circumstances, the need to address environmental concerns, or a need to reassess the appropriate mix of allowable uses based on new information.

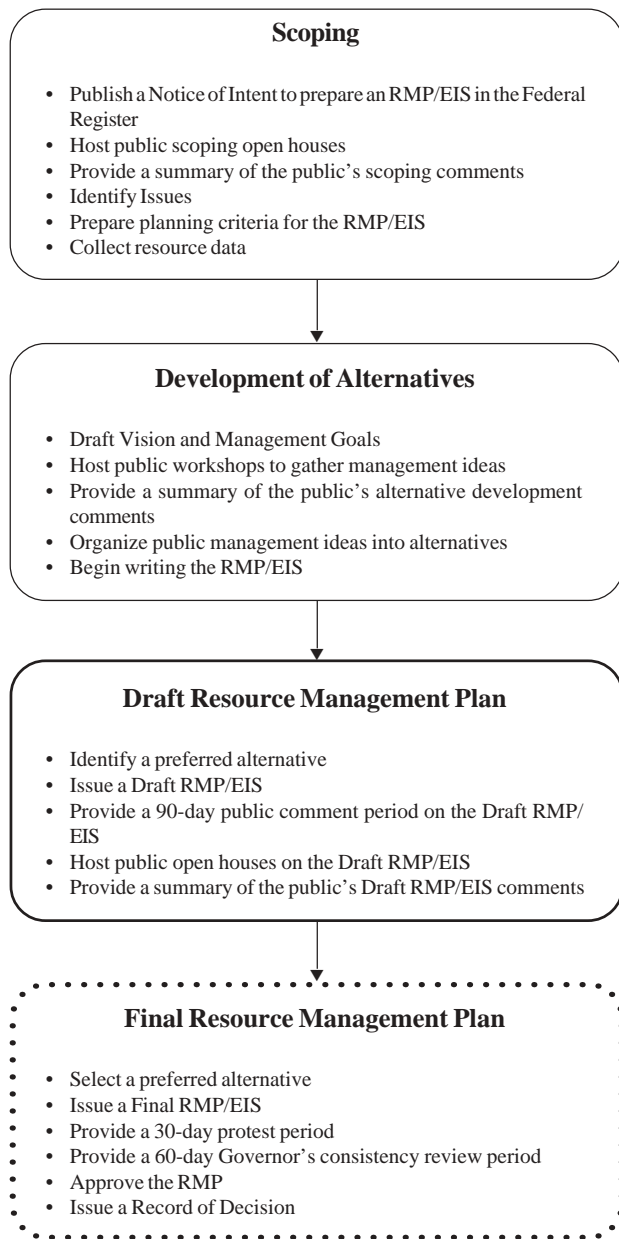
Scoping is the first step in the planning process and closely involves the public with identifying issues, providing resource or other information, and developing planning criteria to guide preparation of the RMP.

On April 24, 2002, a Notice of Intent to prepare the RMP was published in the Federal Register. This notice marked the beginning of a scoping effort that would invite extensive public involvement as a means of helping define the issues to be addressed in this Draft RMP/EIS.

The notice was followed by news releases in April and June 2002, updates to the public in May and June 2002, a newsletter in June 2002, and a newspaper-type handout in July 2002. All of these information tools conveyed information about the planning process, scoping open houses, potential issues and questions/answers about the Monument.

The scoping process invited public participation through written comments, emails and open houses. Eleven open houses were held between July 8 and August 6, 2002. Over 320 people attended the open houses and the public provided 5,700 comment letters and emails (BLM 2002a). All of the scoping comments were read and 1,766 specific comments were identified and coded (BLM 2002b).

Figure 1.2
Steps in Preparing the
Resource Management Plan



Issues Addressed

The preliminary issues were identified in the Preparation Plan for the RMP (BLM 2002c). They were identified by the BLM and other agencies at meetings, and/or were suggested by individuals and groups by way of phone calls, emails, letters and past meetings concerning the proposed designation. They represented the BLM's expectations (prior to scoping) about what concerns or problems exist with current management. The preliminary issues were

included in a June 2002 newsletter, and displayed during the scoping open houses in July and August 2002. They were then modified based on the scoping comments and expanded to include a new issue: economic and social conditions (BLM 2002a).

From data collection and analysis perspectives, some of these six issues overlap one another, and each contains a number of different sub-issues which address more specific uses and resources related to the topic. [Appendix C](#) presents more detailed information about these issues.

How will human activities and uses be managed?

The Monument provides a variety of activities and uses. Recreational activities include motorized and non-motorized touring; upland game bird and big and small game hunting; backpacking; horseback riding; sightseeing; pleasure driving; river floating; motorized river boating; and the backcountry use of small fixed-wing aircraft on primitive landing strips. A subgroup of the Central Montana RAC addressed visitor use recommendations for the river portion of the Monument. The designation of the Bear Paw Battlefield National Park in 2005, may result in increased use along the Nez Perce National Historic Trail. A new BLM interpretive center in Fort Benton, which is under construction and scheduled to open in 2006, will focus on Monument values and uses both on the Missouri River and in the uplands.

Commercial guides and outfitters, operating under special recreation permits from the BLM, provide services related to some recreational activities such as hunting and river floating. Increased visitation has led to increased demands for visitor services, requests for outfitter permits, requests for aerial tours of the Monument, and a higher demand for emergency services such as search and rescue.

A number of non-recreational uses also occur in the Monument, including rights-of-way for roads, utility lines and communication sites, livestock grazing, etc. All of these activities have an effect on the area environment and on local communities surrounding the Monument. Careful management of these activities is crucial to protecting the Monument resources.

In some instances, such as oil and gas leasing within the Monument, valid existing rights are in effect and must be recognized in the RMP. In March 2000, the Montana Wilderness Association filed suit challenging BLM's issuance of three of these leases, alleging the BLM did not fully comply with NEPA, the Endangered Species Act, and the National Historic Preservation Act. In March 2004, the Montana Federal District Court ruled in favor of the plaintiffs and ordered the BLM to prepare an EIS for the oil and gas leasing program that covers the three leases. The leases involved in the suit, as well as nine others in the Monument,

were based on the BLM's 1988 West HiLine RMP. In light of the court's ruling, the BLM believes all 12 leases in the Monument and based on the West HiLine RMP should be analyzed in this Monument RMP. This RMP will consider the current stipulations that apply to the 12 leases issued under the West HiLine RMP, and the conditions of approval or mitigating measures that should be applied to surface occupancy and surface-disturbing activities associated with all 43 oil and gas leases in the Monument, which cover about 42,000 acres.

What facilities and infrastructure are appropriate to provide visitor interpretation and administration of the Monument?

The planning area is characterized as a predominantly natural environment with few facilities, other than along the UMNWSR, for the comfort and convenience of visitors. Currently, the BLM has a visitor contact station and an office located in Fort Benton, and a variety of recreation sites along the UMNWSR. Additional facilities may be needed for visitor safety and information, and to address human sanitation, vehicle use and other resource uses and impacts.

How will the BLM manage resource uses and protect the biological, historical, cultural, and visual values of the Monument?

Various ways of protecting resources include enforcing existing laws and regulations, educating visitors, managing access, setting management and research priorities, suppressing wildfires and managing fuels, restoring degraded ecological conditions, or some combination of these approaches.

Some of the Monument's major resources for which management decisions must be made by the BLM include cultural, recreation, riparian communities, vegetation and water resources, as well as biodiversity and wildlife habitat.

How will Monument management be integrated with other agency and community plans?

The BLM has a strong commitment to work with other agencies and communities in managing the Monument. Coordination with state agencies that have jurisdiction over resources within the Monument is essential for effective management. These agencies include Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks, and the Montana Department of Natural Resources and Conservation.

Monument objectives call for a significant portion of visitor services related to the Monument to be located in the surrounding communities rather than within the Monument. In order to do this, a good working relationship with local tourism and service providers must be developed and

maintained. Agreements with the local counties and communities for coordinating activities and needs such as planning, transportation, emergency services (i.e., search and rescue), law enforcement, infrastructure and tourism need to be explored.

How will transportation and access be managed?

A network of local, collector and resource roads currently provides access to many areas of the Monument. County roads are routinely graded and maintained by Blaine, Chouteau, Fergus and Phillips Counties, while BLM-managed routes receive various levels of maintenance based on a BLM maintenance schedule.

How will Monument management affect economic and social conditions in the area?

The Monument can provide tourism, hunting, and other forms of recreation while bolstering the economy of Montana. Monument management must recognize the continuation of existing land ownership and the economic activities that are dependent on the land and its natural resources.

Issues Considered but Not Further Analyzed

Scoping also identified 30 issues, topics, or questions that can be addressed by current management, BLM policy, administrative action, or that were beyond the scope of this RMP/EIS. Some of these issues are summarized below, while [Appendix D](#) offers more detail about all 30 of these issues, topics and questions.

Livestock are adversely impacting riparian and upland health.

The Proclamation affirms that “Laws, regulations, and policies followed by the Bureau of Land Management in issuing and administering grazing permits or leases on all lands under its jurisdiction shall continue to apply with regard to the lands in the Monument.” The Standards for Rangeland Health and Guidelines for Livestock Grazing Management were established in 1997, and apply to all BLM land in northcentral Montana, including the Monument. Standard No. 1 established the indicators for healthy upland areas that contribute to proper functioning conditions in the uplands. Standard No. 2 established the indicators for healthy riparian areas that contribute to proper functioning conditions in riparian and wetland areas. In addition, grazing management guidelines specifically emphasize management practices that would maintain and/or improve rangeland health.

The watershed planning and grazing permit/lease renewal process assessed the impact of livestock grazing on the Standards for Rangeland Health, as well as other resource management goals. Part of the assessment process included reviewing allotments for their suitability for grazing, stocking levels, seasons of use, duration of grazing and other grazing management practices and their impact on other resources. When livestock grazing was identified as a cause for not meeting standards or resource management goals, corrective actions were identified. The results of standards assessments and the corresponding corrective actions can be found in the watershed plans. Not all implementation actions occur immediately because of funding and resources available. Through ongoing monitoring and adaptive management strategies, implementation is continuing. Grazing management is discussed further in Chapters 2 and 3 under Vegetation – Native Plants and Vegetation – Riparian.

Management of the Monument needs to recognize the need for adequate funding, including enforcement and interpretation activities. Does the BLM have the capability to implement a management plan for the Monument?

Decisions from an RMP would be implemented over a period of years depending on budget and staff availability. Enforcement and education to protect the values of the Monument will be part of this implementation. Funding levels affect the timing and implementation of management actions and project proposals, but do not affect the decisions made in an RMP. In Fiscal Year 2005, the Monument was managed with a staff of 21 individuals, which includes five seasonal employees, along with support from seven individuals from other BLM offices (this does not include other support services such as procurement, engineering, information resources, fire, etc.). This issue is addressed by BLM policy and budgets during implementation.

How will the quality of the river experience be maintained or improved relative to supersonic flights and sonic booms?

The Monument is located beneath the Hays Military Operations Area (MOA). The Hays MOA overlies a large portion of northcentral Montana at altitudes ranging from 300 feet above ground level, up to 18,000 feet above mean sea level. The Federal Aviation Administration has the responsibility to plan, manage, and control the structure and use of all airspace over the United States, including the Hays MOA. This issue is beyond the scope of the RMP since the BLM has no jurisdiction or authority for this MOA.

How should the communities near the Monument prosper with management of the Monument?

The BLM has a strong commitment to work with communities in managing the Monument, including activities and needs such as planning, transportation, emergency services, law enforcement, infrastructure, and tourism. Throughout the RMP, opportunities to work with private landowners and surrounding communities have been identified and we can assess effects to communities from our activities. However, preparation of specific community economic development plans is beyond the scope of this RMP.

Leave private land out of the Monument.

The Proclamation designating the Monument applies to “all lands and interests in lands owned or controlled by the United States within the boundaries of the area described on the map” The BLM has no jurisdiction over private land.

What is the BLM’s authority to regulate recreational activities on the Upper Missouri National Wild and Scenic River, including recreation user fees and motorized watercraft restrictions?

FLPMA gives the BLM general authority to regulate and enforce the occupancy and use of the public lands through permits and fees (43 USC § 1732 (b), 1733 (1994)). Through 2004, the Land and Water Conservation Fund Act of 1964 empowered the BLM to issue Special Recreation Permits (SRPs) according to its own procedures and fee schedules (16 USC § 460l-6a(c) (1994)). These SRPs help manage group activities, recreation events, motorized recreation vehicle activities, and other special recreation uses in accordance with procedures at fees established by the agency involved.

The Federal Lands Recreation Enhancement Act (FLREA) of 2004 gives the Secretary of the Interior authority to issue SRPs and charge fees connected to issuing those permits. This authority began in 2005, and applies to group activities, recreation events and motorized vehicle use activities on federal recreational lands and waters. This act replaces the BLM authority to charge fees under the Land and Water Conservation Fund Act.

Bureau regulations (43 CFR 2930) require SRPs for all commercial uses on the public lands and waters that the BLM manages, including permits for any uses in special areas such as wild and scenic rivers. The BLM can manage, require and enforce permits and fees within a wild and scenic river to protect the river values, even if the river users do not set foot upon BLM land (63 IBLA at 381-82). Management activities and enforcement are designed to protect public lands, property, users, occupants, resources, and activities on or having a clear potential to affect lands adjacent to BLM land or related waters.

Planning Criteria

The BLM planning regulations (43 CFR 1610.4-2) require planning criteria to guide preparation of the RMP. Planning criteria are the constraints or ground rules that guide and direct the preparation of the plan. They ensure the plan is tailored to the identified issues and that unnecessary data collection and analyses are avoided.

The following criteria were developed based on applicable laws and regulations, agency guidance, and the result of public comment.

- This Draft RMP/EIS will be completed in compliance with FLPMA and NEPA and all other applicable laws. It will meet the requirements of the establishing Proclamation to protect the Monument’s cultural features and natural resources.
- The Upper Missouri River Breaks National Monument planning team will work cooperatively with the State of Montana, tribal governments, county and municipal governments, other Federal agencies, and all other interested groups, agencies, and individuals. Public participation will be encouraged throughout the process.
- The Monument RMP/EIS will not address boundary adjustments. Boundaries were established by the President and cannot be adjusted administratively by the BLM.
- The management plan will establish the guidance upon which the BLM will rely in managing the Monument.
- The Monument RMP/EIS will emphasize the protection and enhancement of the Monument’s natural resources and emphasize the BLM’s mission to serve the diverse outdoor recreation demands of visitors while helping them to maintain the sustainable conditions needed to conserve their lands and their recreation choices. (BLM 2003b)
- The Monument RMP/EIS will recognize valid existing rights and outline the process the BLM will use after completion of the management plan to address existing mining claims, or to address applications for other land use authorizations. The RMP will include a natural gas development plan.
- The lifestyles and concerns of area residents, including grazing and ranching, will be recognized in the plan.
- Any lands located within the Monument’s administrative boundary, which are acquired by the BLM to accomplish purposes for which the Monument was

designated, will be managed consistent with the Monument RMP/EIS, subject to any constraints associated with the acquisition.

- The plan will recognize the state's responsibility and authority to manage wildlife. The BLM will consult with Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks as necessary.
- The Monument RMP/EIS will include a transportation plan that addresses transportation and access, and will identify where better access is warranted, where access should remain as is, and where less access is appropriate to protect Monument resources.
- The management of grazing is regulated by laws and regulations other than the Monument Proclamation. The plan will incorporate the Standards for Rangeland Health and Guidelines for Livestock Grazing Management as established in recently implemented watershed and/or activity plans.
- The planning process will provide the opportunity to involve American Indian tribal governments and will provide for the protection of traditional values and traditional cultural properties.
- Decisions in the Monument RMP/EIS will strive to be compatible with the existing plans and policies of adjacent local, state and federal agencies as long as the decisions are consistent with the purposes, policies, and programs of federal law and regulations applicable to public lands.

Related Plans

This section discusses other plans that are germane to the development of this RMP. The BLM planning regulations require that RMPs be "...consistent with officially approved or adopted resource-related plans, and the policies and programs contained therein, of other Federal agencies, State and local governments and American Indian tribes, so long as the guidance and resource management plans are also consistent with the purposes, policies and programs of Federal laws and regulations applicable to public lands...." (43 CFR 1610.3-2(a)).

Management actions identified in the alternatives are not known to be inconsistent with other planning documents.

Chinook-Blaine County Comprehensive Plan (1979)

The comprehensive plan provides information on population, projected land needs for residential growth, land use, public facilities, natural resources, and land use problems. The plan also provides land use policy recommendations

for land use, public investments, and local governmental administrative policy changes.

Heartland Montana Economic Development Plan: 1987-1992 for Lewistown/Fergus County (1987)

The economic development plan provides information on the economy, including population and basic industries, resources, and constraints to realizing development potential. The plan also provides business objectives and a community vision.

Black-footed Ferret Recovery Plan (1988)

The plan outlines steps for recovery of the black-footed ferret throughout its historical range. A six-step process is outlined beginning with ensuring success of captive breeding, locating reintroduction habitat, finding other populations of ferrets, devising release strategies, managing reintroduced and other populations, and building programs for public support of the recovery effort.

Fergus County Land Use Policy (1992)

The policy is the county land use plan developed by the Fergus County government to guide the use of lands and resources in Fergus County and to protect the rights of private landowners. The nature and intent of Fergus County's land use policy is to protect the customs and cultures of county citizens through protection of private property rights, the facilitation of a free market economy and the establishment of a process to ensure self-determination by Fergus County residents. A Fergus County Growth Plan is in progress.

Recovery Plan for the Pallid Sturgeon (1993)

The recovery plan describes the distribution, status, life history, and habitat-association information that is known about the pallid sturgeon. The plan provides the short- and long-term recovery objectives and actions needed to achieve recovery of the pallid sturgeon.

Montana Bald Eagle Management Plan (1994)

The plan provides landowners and resource managers with information on the biology of bald eagles and management guidelines to allow informed decisions about land use to help conserve the species and its habitat.

Conservation Plan for Black-Tailed and White-Tailed Prairie Dogs in Montana (2002)

The goal of this conservation plan for the State of Montana is to provide for management of prairie dog populations and habitats to ensure long-term viability of prairie dogs and associated species.

Chouteau County Growth Policy Plan (2004)

The plan includes a framework of goals and policies, and an implementation program which outlines specific action steps that are derived from the goals and policies.

Management Plan and Conservation Strategies for Sage Grouse in Montana – Final (2005)

The plan is designed to provide biological information, identify information gaps, and facilitate data collection required for future resource management decisions. It establishes a process to achieve sage-grouse management objectives and provides a framework to guide local management efforts. Regional or local groups will adapt the statewide plan to develop and implement strategies in respective geographic areas that will improve or maintain the sagebrush steppe and reduce or mitigate factors that may further reduce habitats or populations.

Relationship to BLM Policies, Plans, and Programs

A number of BLM plans relate to or otherwise govern management in the Monument. These plans are considered by the BLM when implementation-level planning is conducted or other specific actions are analyzed. These plans are listed below and provide a perspective of the many management considerations pertinent to the Monument.

Missouri Breaks Grazing Environmental Impact Statement (1979)

This plan addresses the grazing management program in the Missouri Breaks area of central Montana. This EIS involves nearly 2.2 million acres of BLM land, including most of the Monument.

Prairie Potholes Environmental Impact Statement (1982)

This plan addresses the grazing management program in the prairie potholes area of northern Montana. This EIS involves about 1.75 million acres of BLM land, including some BLM land on the north side of the Missouri River in the Monument.

Northwest Area Noxious Weed Control Program Final Environmental Impact Statement (1985)

This plan describes and analyzes the environmental impacts of implementing a program for controlling noxious weeds on BLM land in the states of Idaho, Montana, Oregon, Washington, and Wyoming. Control methods include chemical, manual, mechanical, and biological.

Missouri Breaks Wilderness Suitability Study Environmental Impact Statement (1987)

This plan addressed the environmental consequences of managing 12 wilderness study areas (WSAs) as wilderness or nonwilderness, including the six WSAs in the Monument.

Montana Statewide Wilderness Study Report (1991)

This plan provides the wilderness recommendations for 36 WSAs in Montana, including the six WSAs in the Monument.

Vegetation Treatment on BLM Lands in Thirteen Western States (1991)

This plan assesses the environmental consequences of implementing a vegetation treatment program to manage a variety of vegetation species on BLM land in the Western United States. The vegetation treatment methods include manual, mechanical, biological, prescribed burning, and chemical.

Nongame Migratory Bird Habitat Conservation Plan (1992)

This plan provides for managing nongame birds that migrate to the tropics or use neotropical habitats. The overall intent is to reverse the decline in some bird populations and to implement a proactive program for other migratory species.

Upper Missouri National Wild and Scenic River Management Plan Update (1993)

This plan provides management direction for the Upper Missouri National Wild and Scenic River. It identifies priority and site-specific locations for implementing management actions to address visitor use.

Standards for Rangeland Health and Guidelines for Livestock Grazing Management (1997)

This plan documents the effects of adopting regional Standards for Rangeland Health and Guidelines for Livestock Grazing Management on BLM land in Montana, North Dakota and South Dakota. Standards are physical or biological conditions or functions required for healthy, sustainable rangelands. Guidelines are management practices or methods which help ensure that standards can be met or significant progress can be made toward meeting standards.

Watershed and Landscape Plans (1998 – 2005)

Eight watershed or landscape plans were completed in the

last 8 years which address implementation of Standards for Rangeland Health and Guidelines for Livestock Grazing Management. These plans include riparian-wetland objectives and methods for achieving those objectives on Monument lands.

Fire/Fuels Management Plan Environmental Assessment/Plan Amendment for Montana and the Dakotas (2003)

This Monument RMP/EIS will implement the National Fire Plan and 2001 Federal Fire Policy in Montana, North Dakota and South Dakota, and provide general guidance for fire management (including both fire suppression and fuels management) needed to protect other resource values.

Vision and Management Goals

The BLM's vision is to manage the Monument in a manner that maintains and protects its biological, geological, visual and historic objects and preserves its remote and scenic character. The RMP will incorporate the Proclamation, multiple use and existing laws, while recognizing valid existing rights and authorizations, and providing diverse recreational opportunities.

A number of management goals guided the development of alternatives for this RMP. These goals are the result of information provided through public scoping, existing laws and regulations, the Proclamation, and the planning team. These goals include:

- Manage visitor use and services on these BLM lands in a manner that protects Monument values and resources.
- Manage these BLM lands in a multiple use manner consistent with the Proclamation and all current law and policy.
- Manage legal and physical access to and within the Monument to provide opportunities for diverse activities.
- Manage these BLM lands for a variety of sustainable visitor experiences in mostly primitive and natural landscapes.
- Manage these BLM lands in a manner that provides a healthy ecosystem supporting plant and animal species and achieves a sustainable variation of native vegetation communities.
- Manage these BLM lands in a manner that provides current and future generations with the social and economic benefits compatible with the Proclamation.

- Manage these BLM lands in a manner that involves the public and collaborating agencies (local, state, federal and tribal) at every opportunity.

These management goals are discussed in more detail in [Appendix E](#).

Development of Alternatives

The scoping results, the issues to be addressed, the planning criteria and legislative restraints, related plans, and the vision and management goals all helped define the scope of possible alternatives that will be carried forward throughout the planning process.

Management strategies aimed at providing viable options for addressing the planning issues were then developed. These strategies were developed through a public process with newsletters, briefings, and alternative development workshops to inform the public of their opportunities to participate and to provide input. Eleven workshops were held in July 2003. Over 7,000 comments on management options were received (BLM 2004a). The management strategies provided the building blocks from which the general management scenarios and eventually, the more detailed management alternatives were developed.

As alternatives were being developed, it became necessary to organize the volume of public comments, resource inventories and resulting analyses into these four categories which will be carried forward throughout this Draft RMP/EIS:

- Health of the Land and Fire
- Visitor Use, Services and Infrastructure
- Natural Gas Exploration and Development
- Access and Transportation

As a result of a Federal District Court ruling in March 2004, which required the BLM to prepare an EIS for three oil and gas leases issued under the West HiLine RMP, the BLM decided to expand this RMP/EIS analysis to include 12 West HiLine leases located in the Monument. The BLM went back to the public in November 2004, for input on developing alternatives for the 12 leases. That public process included news releases, an update and newsletter to the mailing list, and six public meetings to provide opportunities for public participation. A total of 5,700 comments were received (BLM 2005). An analysis of those public comments was included in the development of the range of alternatives for the 12 West HiLine oil and gas leases, which are incorporated into this Draft RMP/EIS.

Draft Resource Management Plan

Six alternatives for managing the Monument, including a “no action” alternative (current management), are described in this Draft RMP/EIS.

The alternatives describe various ways the provisions of the Proclamation would be applied to managing this Monument. Each alternative has a somewhat different emphasis, primarily defined in terms of resource focus, but all maintain and protect the biological, geological and historical objects.

Public involvement will continue following the issuance of this Draft RMP/EIS. The BLM will provide a 90-day public comment period and will host a series of open houses in the same communities where the scoping open houses and alternative development workshops were held, and potentially in other communities as requested.

Final Resource Management Plan

Following the 90-day public comment period on this Draft RMP/EIS, the comments will be analyzed and a Final RMP/EIS will be prepared and released to the public in the summer of 2006. A 30-day protest period and 60-day Governor’s consistency review period will be provided following publication of the Final RMP/EIS. At the end of the protest period and Governor’s consistency review, the BLM may issue a Record of Decision (ROD) approving implementation of any portion of the proposed RMP not under protest. Approval would be withheld on any portion of the plan under protest until the protest has been resolved. Decisions on road designations may be appealed to the Interior Board of Land Appeals (IBLA) following the publication of the ROD. The ROD will include information on the appeal process.